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QUIET HOURS WITH THE ORDINAL

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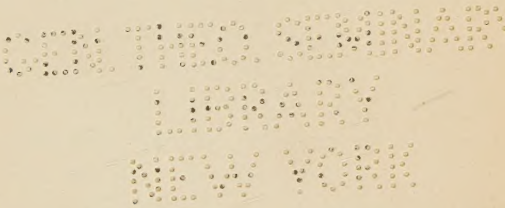
QUIET HOURS WITH THE ORDINAL

A SERIES OF ADDRESSES

BY THE

RIGHT REV. J. W. DIGGLE, D.D.

BISHOP OF CARLISLE



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PREFACE

THE publication of these Addresses is due to friends. They were first delivered on the Quiet Day at the Advent Ordination of 1902, in the Diocese of Worcester. Immediately afterwards, a written request for their publication, signed by the Bishop of Worcester (now Bishop of Birmingham), the chaplains and examining chaplains, and the newly ordained deacons and priests, was made to me. Since then the Addresses have been delivered to several bodies of clergy, and have been followed by similar kindly requests. In obedience to these repeated requests they are now published; and published in the colloquial form in which they were delivered. They are very simple. May it please God to bless their simplicity to His service.

J. W. CARLIOL.

ROSE CASTLE,
CARLISLE,
All Saints' Day, 1906.

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QUIET HOURS WITH THE ORDINAL

THE VOCATION

Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this Office and Ministration (of Deacons), to serve God for the promoting of His glory and the edifying of His people? Do you think in your heart, that you be truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the order of this Church of England, to the Order and Ministry of Priesthood?

On these two questions, my brothers, the one addressed to the ordinand deacons, the other to the ordinand priests, I would invite you in this quiet solemn hour to ponder very earnestly, with hearts quite bare before God, the most tender yet most awful of heart-searchers, from Whom no secrets are hid, yet Whose heart of yearning, understanding love is greater and gentler than any human heart can ever be. These two

questions are not common questions; they are altogether uncommon both in their occasion and their character. They go very deep down and very high up. They cut to the quick. They divide the bones from the marrow of our ministerial life. They are questions of life and death to each of us personally; of life and death also to our ministerial influence. If we are not truly called to our ministry then will our ministry be one long falsehood, a pretentious hypocrisy, a misery to ourselves, a scorn in the eyes of men, a profession grievous to God. Therefore, my brothers, before it is too late, ere the threshold is crossed, take yourselves straight up to these questions, face them with a firm and humble front: *Can I trust that I am inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost? May I think in my heart that I am truly called to this office and ministry?* I do not doubt that you have often ere this put these questions to yourselves, aye, often on your knees, else you could not rightly and honestly be here awaiting ordination. The questions will be put to you publicly by the bishop in God's house on the day of your ordination. Put them, I beseech you, privately to yourselves now. Do not explain them away. Do not shrink from them or shirk them. In the strength of God stand up to them like men, and be true. Aye, and let us who were ordained

long years ago put these questions to ourselves afresh: especially let him who speaks to you put them searchingly to himself: for any speaking to others is seldom blessed of God that is not first, and most directly, spoken to ourselves.

But to answer a question truly we must first understand its meaning rightly. What, then, is meant by a "call from God"? Apart from the particular call to the ministry, other calls from God come to men in various ways at different times. Unconsciously a call came to us in our Baptism—that first grand vocation of the Holy Ghost to renounce all evil, to believe all truth, to follow all righteousness. Then in the sweet years of simple childhood heaven seemed to call from every side of us. We felt the presence and heard the voice of God in stars and clouds, in birds and flowers, amidst the solemnities of mountains, by the shores of the strangely vast, far-sounding sea. The voice came to us in stillness and twilight, in beautiful visions by night, in wondrous dreams by day. We heard it, too, from the lips of a pious nurse, on a loving mother's knee, on a tender father's breast. At times we re-echoed the voice within ourselves in holy hymns and trustful prayers. And we can still remember how mysteriously the Presence brooded over the

awe of worship and how clear in the Sanctuary sounded the call; not perhaps to the ministry, yet, at least, to the service of Christ.

Then came our Confirmation with fresh motions of the Holy Ghost, fresh calls, fresh gifts by the laying on of hands, new and nearer presences of the Lord in the Holy Communion. And well for us would it have been if we had always heeded these calls, always had lovingly cultivated these hallowing presences, always had "practised the presence of God," as Jeremy Taylor says, always had stirred up the gift that was in us, always had yielded a loyal obedience to these heavenly calls—never had grieved or quenched the Holy Ghost. With some of us, thank God, it has been so: our days have been happily linked each to each, without sinful breach, in the bonds of a natural and progressive piety.

But with some of us it may have been far otherwise. Low companionships and low books have brought us spiritually low. We have succumbed to the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the evil one. The smoke of our sins has at times hidden from view the clear shining of God's bright and holy countenance. Or we have transferred the sceptre of our souls from the sovereign hand of a reasonable faith to the usurping clutch of a faithless superstition. Or perhaps our indolence,

indolence in work and worship, has been our only fault—our only fault, indeed, yet awful fault enough. We have merely not stirred up the gift that was in us, merely not daily practised the presence of God, merely not trained ourselves in the gymnasium of the Gospel, merely buried our talent; and the buried talent is now our condemnation, the untrained strength has degenerated into feebleness, the unpractised presence has grown vague and dim, the untended fire of the Holy Ghost has fallen into cold cinders, as all untended fires fall.

While we were in one of these states, the happily prepared or the unhappily unprepared, suddenly we found ourselves at a crisis; the crisis sprung upon us by the necessity of deciding our career in life. The days of pupilage were gone; the moment of manhood had struck. The question of our career stared us menacingly in the face and clamoured for settlement. Thrice happy were those who had not postponed their decision till the final hour when compulsion no longer admitted of further consideration or delay; who, by a careful prescient scrutiny of their talents and temperament, their powers and leanings, assisted by the loving counsels of relatives and friends, had anticipated the crisis of decision so that when the question of career had to be definitely

answered they were not altogether at a loss to reply.

Still for all of us, even the best prepared, the choice of a career is very momentous ; and unless we are void of imagination and therefore incapable of apprehending the issues involved, its actual decision is a crisis of deep solicitude. Rarely are the strength and peace of prayer more deeply felt than by those who at this great crisis trust in the Lord with all their heart and lean not to their own understanding. All true Christian men naturally seek the guidance of God in the choice of their career ; but most of all is this guidance needed when the choice is tending towards the sacred ministry. For the ministry is a career distinct from all other careers in one essential particular. All careers of every kind profoundly affect the life ; but the ministry not only affects, *it is*, the life. In any other career a man may to some extent stand outside his calling ; in his inmost being he may live above it, or below, or on the same level apart. But with the ministry this is wholly impossible. And for this reason, the ministry depends on the man and the man permeates his ministry. True, the efficacy of the sacraments he administers and the truth of the message he proclaims are not made void by the unworthiness of the minister. Very sorry

indeed would the plight of the people be were this the case; especially if the unworthiness were a secret known only to God and the minister himself. Yet none the less a man is verily identified with his ministry and the ministry with the man. For the man himself his ministry means either his happiness or misery; an incomparable happiness if his eye be single and his vocation all in all to him, an unimaginable misery if his whole heart is not in it, and his profession be only the provision and not the passion of his life. Moreover, unless a man be, by God's grace, a good example of his ministry—a mirror of it, blurred indeed, but yet a mirror—he will win from the people neither affection nor esteem, and if he holds neither of these keys to their hearts, his ministry will be futile and frustrate. No ministry can be deeply happy to a man, or greatly fruitful to his people, unless it be a ministry with a true vocation; a vocation according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the moving of the Holy Ghost. Again, therefore, my brothers, I humbly beseech you to put the question clearly to yourselves: "Am I, even I, being now inwardly moved and truly called by God Himself to the lifelong work of this sacred office?"

You may indeed rightly enquire, "How can I certainly know whether or not my vocation be

from God? What are the signs by which the guidings of the Holy Ghost and the call of our Lord Jesus Christ may be surely and unmistakeably recognized?" Unmistakeable signs are, we know, very few. Here and there a man seems to himself and to others to have been divinely separated, extra-naturally called, to the sacred ministry from his mother's womb. As a fish is born to swim and a bird to fly, so he is born a clergyman. From a child he has been convinced of this, and no subsequent events have shaken the conviction. Others, too, in later life, after years spent in secular avocations, have received the sacred call as clearly as prophets under the Old Dispensation or Apostles under the New.

But unmistakeable calls, yea even unmistakeable aptitudes, are very rare. Accordingly you will notice that the questions in the Ordinal are not, "Are you certain? Are you sure?" but "Do you trust? do you think in your heart" that you are truly called to this office, inwardly moved to this ministry? All that our Church in her calm and sober wisdom teaches us to ask ourselves are questions such as these: Have I seriously and solemnly considered the matter? Have I long and earnestly prayed over it? Have I cried submissively from the depths of my being, "Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do?" Have I

left myself unreservedly as a little child to the guiding of God's good providence? Have I, with stern and unflinching severity, searched out my heart and tried my reins, and tested my will and laid bare my real motives before God? Am I quite sure that no concupiscence of social advantage, no lust for eminence or preferment, not even the desire for bread, no selfishness of any sort, has impelled me to my decision? Am I fully persuaded that, however unworthy, I do earnestly desire to be unselfish and sincere in the promotion of God's glory, the edifying of His people, and the service of my fellow men? If, my brothers, you can give to God and your own conscience true and straight answers to these questions, then, whatever be your sense of unworthiness, aye, whatever in your past life may now be causing you deep sorrow of heart and cleansing contrition of spirit, you may humbly trust and rightly think that your choice of this blessed career is the choice of the Holy Ghost, and your vocation to the ministry a call from Jesus Christ our Lord.

The instrument of your call may have been neither rocking earthquake, nor flaming fire, nor rending wind, but simply the still small voice of some of the ordinary providences of God—the example of a friend, a parent's hope, a sentence in a book, an appeal in a sermon, a sympathetic

glimpse of the world with its sins and remorse, its laughter and tears, its failures and aspirations, its griefs and joys, its hopes and despairs, its obvious need of redemption, yet its amazing ignorance of God. Or you may not even clearly realize what the instrument of your calling was. Something, you know not what, turned your thoughts and bent your will this way. Like the wind it came you knew not whence, and blew at first you knew not whither. But gradually you found yourself turning away from all other callings; a movement towards this calling, vague in the beginning, but slowly growing more distinct, stirred within you, and at length, perhaps, some day suddenly, as you were presenting the oft-repeated prayer "Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth," the movement sprang to its goal, and the conviction was irresistible that, however unmeet and undeserving, your heart was closed against all other vocations and open to this high calling alone. And so you finally decided to be a clergyman. Very significant, says St. Jerome, is this title clerk or clergyman. Etymologically it means a portion or lot. Ministerially it means a lot disposed by God, a portion conferred by Him. But God's lot is no lottery. If in choosing our career we have cast our lot in self-effacing prayer into the lap of God, then our

choice has been no chance, but truly God's disposing.

And so we turn once more in lowliness and courage to face these two heart-searching questions: May I trust that I am inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon me the office of deacon? May I think in my heart that I am truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ to this office of priest? And now, after due examination, we find nothing overstrained, nothing of crushing terror in them. On the contrary, we find them to be questions, after the tranquil genius of our Church of England, no less sober than searching. We find them quite reasonable questions, asking for no frenzied or ecstatic reply; sane and healthy questions to which hysteria can give no sane or healthy answer. In a word, although most piercing and solemn, they are questions addressed to honest intelligence and genuine affection, and demanding only the brave and simple answers which the Ordinal itself supplies:—*I think so; I trust so.* . . . That is all. By the grace of God, my brothers, the earnest thought, the humble trust is quite enough.

REVERENCE FOR THE BIBLE

The next questions in the Ordinal relate to the Bible. *Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament? Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? and are you determined, out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?*

It is far from my intention, my brothers, at a season like this, a season of spiritual meditation rather than of critical enquiry, to disturb your minds with doubtful disputations concerning the Canon of Scripture, the authorship and editorship of its various books, the true character and tests of inspiration, or the proper seat of the Bible among the authorities for religion. All

these, and many other kindred problems, are of absorbing intellectual interest: many of them are of supreme practical value. I cannot doubt that you have at least begun to examine some of these problems; for they are occupying the attention of the great body of the intelligent Christians of our age, and of many also who do not profess the Christian faith. In looking forward, therefore, to your ministry you cannot have been indifferent to these problems. And in the years to come, if your knowledge of men and their thoughts increases as it ought, you will find yourselves far more persistently confronted with these problems than you can be aware of yet. Unless, creeping into a dark and motionless shell, and withdrawing yourselves from learning, thinking people, you cease to learn and to think, and as a consequence drop into cyphers without coefficients—you will be compelled (I hope with a glad compulsion) during the course of your ministry, to face many hard problems touching the authenticity and authority of the Bible, its penmen and chronology, its revelations, its inspiration, its interpretation, the Canonical and extra-canonical writings, the relation of the Bible to the Church, and of both to tradition, the connection of the development of morals and doctrine to the immutable deposit of God, and the progressive

apprehensions of men; the various values of reason and faith, of research and authority. These and many such like questions will demand from you systematic study, clear and deep thoughtfulness, reverent response.

But a Quiet Day for spiritual meditation, like ours now, sets before our minds a class of questions entirely distinct from these. My desire to-day, my brothers, is to fix your attention with all simplicity on the questions of the Ordinal in such a spirit as to avoid speculation and cleave to practice. This much, however, concerning the questions to which I have referred, I think I may, and ought to say. The English branch of the Catholic Church, whose priests and prophets you desire to be, leaves you a large, wise, and copious liberty touching these questions. None of her authoritative pronouncements bind you down to any narrow or unenlightened views about the Bible. You may thankfully rejoice in this liberty, only use it not as a cloke for intellectual, but unintelligent, licentiousness. Do not hastily, with superficial cleverness, catch up the latest novelty of opinion as if it were a new revelation of indefeasible truth. Prove all things: especially things professing to be new. Novelty is not always identical with verity. Things are not false because they are old, or true

because they are new. Make it quite clear that you have an honest open mind, that you are no slave of tradition or prejudice, but a warm devotee of light and knowledge; at the same time make it equally clear that you are a patient reverent student, sympathetic towards the past, receptive of the present, courageous for the future, and not a flimsy unstable sensationalist, tossed hither and thither by every gust of windy speculation. Above all things be very sensitive to the sacredness of truth and, conscious of your own limitations, assiduously cultivate the noble talent of intelligent awe. If you approach all Biblical problems in this serious, studious, progressive spirit, the most free-thinking will not despise you, the most conservative will learn to trust you, and in the sweat of your brow you will both earn and eat the bread of a hallowing self-respect.

But the questions about the Bible in the Ordinal—questions which, at one of the most solemn turning-points in your life, you will shortly be called upon to answer in God's house, before the All-penetrating Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart—are, as I said just now, questions not of high intellectual criticism, but of deep moral conviction. *Do you unfeignedly believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament? and are you persuaded they*

contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? However weighty and searching, these questions are quite simple and plain. They are not of the nature of speculative problems. They are direct enquiries concerning facts. They deal not with the method of inspiration, but with its purpose and power. Do you accept the two Testaments as canonical Scriptures, and revere them as a divine treasury of articles of faith and standards of conduct? Do you believe the Bible to be one of God's greatest instruments for the redemption of mankind? Are you persuaded that its teachings are sufficient to instruct men, not indeed in the secondary and ever-changing customs of religion, but in its primary vital principles, its never-changing foundations of saving faith and righteous conduct? Furthermore are you resolved never to teach anything contrary to these Scriptures? Will you make its standards your standards, its rules your rules, its ideals your ideals? Will you be very studious to frame your own lives, and the lives of them that pertain to you, according to the models of these Scriptures? And, chief of all, are you quite clear and sure that no amount of literary belief in the Scriptures is of eternally redeeming power without true, humble, personal

belief in Jesus Christ; that the Written Word is impotent to save apart from the Incarnate and Life-giving Word, of Whom the Written Word is the revelation and the record?

These questions which the Ordinal asks of us concerning the Bible are quick and cutting questions. They reach down to the very root of our ministry. No branch of the Catholic Church lays more tremendous stress on the cardinal importance of the Bible than the Church of England. Few, indeed, lay equal stress. The Bible is the canon and keystone of the Prayer-book. To say nothing of the Articles, the whole Anglican liturgy enthrones the Scriptures as the final arbiter of faith and conduct. The Scriptures are the doctrinal centre and circumference of our Church. From them our doctrine radiates: by them its bounds are set. They hallow our worship with their sacred breath. They decide for us our Sacraments. From the fire of their altars our sermons ought to draw their life and light and heat. "No other Church before ours," says Bishop Burnet, "ever required such sponsions concerning the Scriptures from ordinand deacons and ordinand priests; but only from ordinand bishops. Neither in the canons of the ancient Church, nor in the Roman nor Greek Pontifical, are questions such as these of our Anglican

Ordinal put either to deacons or priests; because those Churches commit not to their deacons and priests such liberty of prophesying as ours commits to us. But before entrusting us with this great liberty—a liberty most awful in its responsibility—our Church rightly demands from us these solemn sponsions concerning our belief in the character and sufficiency of those Scriptures which she so trustingly and liberally empowers us to teach." In gratitude, therefore, to our Church, as well as from a deep sense of accountability to God and responsibility for those to whom we shall minister, let each of us in the quiet of our chamber, and on our knees, put to himself once again this night the questions: *Do I unfeignedly believe the Canonical Scriptures? Am I persuaded that they contain all things requisite to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Am I determined never to teach anything contrary to these Scriptures?*

I do not doubt, my brothers, your minds and wills in these things; nor that you are well prepared to answer these questions, humbly and without misgiving, at the altar of your ordination, and to seal your replies sacramentally by the reception of the Holy Communion, and that you are resolved when you go forth to your work to make the Bible the standard of your teaching;

to draw from its wells the living waters of the Living Saviour; and to seek in it the bright commanding ideals of your ministry. Ideals of ministry! Ah! how necessary and how nourishing great ideals are to an interesting and a happy ministry! Let no man hope that he can even conceive, far less attempt, the wondrous possibilities of the Christian ministry without the help and inspiration of ideals. Unless you delight in ideals, grand and noble ideals, your ministry will be a poor business, barren and dull. You may not, perhaps, nay assuredly you will not, realize your ideals; yet none the less is it true that the greater our ideals, the stronger our power: the higher our ideals, the higher shall we climb ourselves, and the higher also shall we beckon others to follow after us.

But where shall we find the noblest ideals of our ministry? Not surely in ourselves. Our own nature is neither rich enough, nor pure enough, to provide adequate ideals for an elevating ministry. Ideals fashioned from the mint of our own self-consciousness are very apt to turn to idols. To keep us from making our own idols, the Church, in the Ordinal, directs our minds persistently to the Bible. What think ye of the Bible: Whose word is it? Is it for you the primal source of Divine truth and redeeming

knowledge? Will you teach nothing as fundamental Christianity but what the Bible teaches? Will you fetch your ministerial ideals from the spiritual storehouse of the Bible? Believe me, my brothers, you will be preserved from many errors and much consequent regret if from the beginning of your ministry you determine, in the strength of the Holy Ghost, to keep yourselves from self-made idols and, instead of self-made idols, to cherish Scriptural ideals.

One great law seems to govern all Scriptural ideals, and that is the law of reverence. Irreverence is a dangerous disease, a subtle poison to man. Religion is, indeed, impossible without reverence. Reverential fear is the beginning, the very first stage, of true religion. It is through lack of reverence that so many professedly religious persons, and professedly religious journals, are obviously and injuriously irreligious. It is only when we habitually stand in awe that we escape the sins of jealous pride and self-assertive superiority. It is a noteworthy fact that no world-religion has originated from the West. All world-religions have been born and nurtured in the East. And one cause of this absence of originating religious power among Western peoples is, I believe, the thin and scanty growth of reverence among them: robust and redeeming

reverence, I mean, as distinguished from enervating and debasing superstition. No revelations are made to the irreverent: only false revelations to the superstitious; it is for the genuinely reverent that genuine revelations are reserved.

We hear much in our days of the value of education, but of all the parts in a good education none is more valuable, and none more difficult, than education in reverence. You will find it no easy task to quicken and nourish in your people a reasonable, ennobling reverence either for their own divine dignity or for the ineffable wonders which are around and above them. Your only hope of doing this is by being very reverential yourselves—manfully and sturdily reverential, not reverential with a cringing feebleness unworthy of your creation in the image of God, and displeasing, I believe, to God after whose likeness you are made—loftily reverential in word and worship, in daily conduct and demeanour. Unless we are first reverential ourselves, our teaching of reverence to others will be ineffectual and vain. And among other things, you will find that the repetition of amusing anecdotes from Biblical examinations do not tend to increase, but to lessen, general reverence in the world at large. There is plenty of good fun to be

found, believe me, without seeking it in exhibitions of heathenish ignorance in examinations, or at the expense of the Bible. Then, too, the condition of the Bibles in many of our schools and churches —their backs broken, their leaves torn or scribbled over with disgraceful writings, even the Bibles in pulpits and sometimes on lecterns shabby and mean—fosters irreverence and puts stumbling-blocks in the way of awe. Most of all, beware of slipshod reading of the Bible in public worship—lifeless, careless reading; insipid, unintelligent, unspiritual reading; reading in a sing-song monotonous artificial voice; the mere mumbling of the Holy Scriptures not only void of heartfelt conviction but void also of taste, tone and colour; reading which would bring well-deserved punishment on a fourth standard child at school—for this slipshod reading, nay far worse than that, this *most shameful and guilty* reading is playing deadly havoc to-day with the reverence for the Bible among the English people. The methods of the stage are out of place in church, yet there is wholesome truth in the cynical observation of Garrick that "actors treat fiction as if it were fact, and the clergy treat fact as if it were fiction." It cut me to the quick when I was asked the other day by a serious intelligent youth, "How can I believe that a man is thinking of what he is

reading when he asks a question and gives the answer in the same tone of voice; or when he says, 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost,' with no more feeling than, 'Here endeth the lesson'?"

Believe me, my brothers, the conduct of our public services, and not least the reading of the Holy Scriptures, is fast becoming a matter of most grave concern. We do not want, God forbid, any histrionic display, any artificial effects in our churches: but we do stand in sore need of distinct and natural utterance, of intelligibility and earnestness, of simple, deep, unmistakeable reverence for the solemn realities for which we publicly pray, and of which we publicly preach and read. All men, we know, have not great capacities for preaching and reading; but no man ought to be a clergyman who has not first humbly and resolutely promised God to make the very best, by systematic effort, of such capacity as he has. It is true also that the power of utterance is by no means the only, not even the highest test of a good man's work and influence; none the less am I persuaded that unless we, the clergy, so conduct the public services that the people feel we ourselves are in them, they themselves will in time be out of them; that unless we cultivate good reading of the Bible the effect of our

reading on reverence for the Bible will not be good.

One powerful factor in the reformation of the Jews in the time of Nehemiah was the revival of an intelligent religious manner of reading the law. The Levites, we are told, read the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading; and the people went away penitent, comforted, compassionate, and rejoicing because they had understood the words that were declared unto them (cf. Nehemiah viii., *passim*). Similarly, I believe, a great reformation would be wrought in the people of England to-day if our public services were always rendered with reality: the prayers with clear and lowly fervour, the lessons with persuasive religious intelligence, the sermons with self-obliterating intensity of conviction. The reading of Holy Scripture is one of God's appointed means for the salvation of mankind. No wonder, therefore, that St. Paul earnestly charged St. Timothy, "pay attention to reading;" the reading of the Holy Scriptures in the public assembly (1 Tim. iv. 13). Consider, my brothers, I affectionately pray you, whether you will not be faithless to your Ordination vows and, in a fearful measure, be frustrating one of our Church's great Advent prayers, unless you do your very best at all times so to read the

Holy Scriptures, that those who hear them may embrace and ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life.

Very solemnizing for us clergy, and for the laity, too, who read the Lessons in church, is the fact narrated in the Gospels, that the only Scripture which Jesus is recorded to have read publicly in the synagogue is the place where it is written "The spirit of the Lord is upon me" (St. Luke iv. 16, 17). Be it ever, my brothers, our habitual prayer before we read the Lessons, "May the Spirit of the Lord be upon me: may I read in the inspiring power of the Holy Ghost." If we always pray before we read we shall never read without reverence, never without power, never without blessing. We shall so read that our hearers will be convinced that we believe what we read, and that conviction of itself will be a great aid to their belief.

ORDINATION VOWS

In the course of our meditations on the Ordinal we have now arrived at the taking of the vows. We first briefly considered the vocation of deacons and priests; then we touched, though only slightly, on a few of our ministerial obligations to the Bible: the standard of our faith, the Canon of our conduct, the fount of our highest ideals. Even more slenderly still, because of the shortness of the time and the large variety of the matter, shall we be able to meditate on the vows of the Ordinal.

But what is done by me for you to-day, my brothers, is of small importance compared with what I trust you will yourselves do for yourselves in the after-time. In all matters pertaining to character and influence, that which one man can do for another, is truly as nothing compared with that which every man can do for himself. Our time to-day is short, but life may be long; and I ask you, humbly and earnestly, to ponder much

and frequently on the Ordinal for yourselves throughout your whole lifetime. Ponder it particularly and very prayerfully at each recurring Ember Season. Four seasons a year, and especially at the anniversary of our ordination, is surely not too much time to consecrate to prayer for fresh outpourings of the Holy Ghost, for the quickening and strengthening of our reverence for the Bible and our devotions to its ideals, for the thankful remembrance of our great Commission, and the renewal in sincere penitence and strong hope of our Ordination vows.

The vows of the Ordinal how august and sacred, yet how reasonable and practical they are! The faithful ministration of the doctrine, sacraments, and discipline of Christ; the banishment of strange and erroneous doctrines; diligent pastoral care; systematic study of the Holy Scriptures; continual prayer; the daily endeavour to set a wholesome example to the flock of Christ; the steady maintenance of quietness, peace, and love; the practice of the great virtue of a glad obedience. Such are the vows, my brothers, to which you will solemnly pledge yourselves at your Ordination. All vows are serious matters to truthful men; but these vows have a seriousness all their own. They are religious vows; vows to God and His Church; and not only to the Church visible, but to the

Church invisible also. "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels," writes St. Paul to St. Timothy (1 Tim. v. 21). And as with the Apostle's charge, so with our Ordination vows: they rend the veil and bring us face to face with the glory of the Cherubim and the awful majesty of the All-Holy God.

It is centuries since the Ordinal was compiled and these vows arranged as we find them now. Yet how apt they are for the most modern ministry! One, indeed, of the many wonderful properties of our Prayer-book is its power of adaptation to the changing years. The ways, the pursuits, the customs, the points of sight, the general temper and standing-ground of life are now widely different from those of the age in which the Prayer-book took its existing form; yet the bulk of the book is as suitable and sufficient for the present age as for that in which it was compiled. Very few changes, indeed, and these not affecting any fundamental principle, would make the Prayer-book as coeval with the twentieth as the sixteenth century.

So, too, with the Ordinal. The cares of the pastoral office are now in outward appearance very different from those of four centuries ago. Then there were no huge towns with indistinct parish boundaries and seething populations; no

Protestant Nonconformist Communities with their separate places of worship; no newspapers, scarcely any committees; none of the multifarious organizations of a modern parish—its clubs, reading-rooms, Sunday and Day schools, societies of many kinds for many purposes, and impossible of enumeration. In these and some other respects the machinery and the duties of ministerial life to-day are different from those of the Reformation era. Yet the Ordinal needs little changing, if any, to render it altogether suitable and fit for the highest requirements of the modern ministry. Nay, truly, on the contrary, one of the greatest needs of modern ministerial life is a resolute and loyal return to the vital principles of the Ordinal: and not least of all to the vital principles underlying the vows.

Again, therefore, my brothers, I lovingly urge you to consider well these vows; vow by vow, examine them carefully. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. Examine also searchingly before God your own clear and definite purpose concerning them. There is nothing in them to affright you or even give you pause, if you are, as surely you are, true and faithful sons of your Church; nothing contrary to reason or Holy Scripture; nothing out of keeping with the highest Christian ideals of the ministry; nothing

which may not be humbly and confidently promised by the grace of God. Yet forgive my boldness in even suggesting the profane possibility, the awful sinfulness, of taking vows such as these without first prayerfully considering them, and honestly, solemnly intending to keep them and carry them out. To take such vows lightly is sacrilege: merely to drift into them is deceit and perjury. I am persuaded, my brothers, that none of you will be guilty of any such wickedness at your ordination. No! the peril of perjury will come later on, when the ardour of your first love begins to cool, when instead of stimulating crisis there is deadening commonplace, when the first sweet wonders of your office are followed by the jading trot of its routine. It is then, not now, that the peril of spiritual slackness, and of equivocal justifications or palliating excuses for that slackness, will assault you. A great and sore peril it is; a peril which the deceitfulness and indolence of our hearts often blind us to. Yet, if we flee not from the peril, but allow it to overtake us, we are liars unto God and traitors to our Church: for the vows of our ordination are not the promise of a moment, they are the pledge of a life.

The peril, when it comes, will probably beset you from one of two directions: either from the

lowness of public opinion, or from the dissipation of distractions enrobed in the disguise of duties. You will soon begin to find that multitudes of people dislike the hardness of religious truth and the practice of self-denial; especially when applied to themselves. In others they generally like it very much. The more selfish a parishioner is, the more unselfish, as a rule, he expects his parish priest to be. You must be prepared for this. Many people desire to go their own way all the week, and then have salvation made easy for them on Sunday. And the less a clergyman disturbs their habits, and the more successfully he makes pillows for their selfishness, the more patronage from these people he will receive; particularly in wealthy towns and fashionable watering-places. Just as those doctors are sometimes in greatest request who let their patients have their own way and live as they like; and then prescribe for them drugs which temporarily modify, but cannot ultimately avert, the painful consequences; so those clergy are sometimes most in request who say much about God's mercy and little about His judgments, much of His love and little of His wrath; who prescribe receipts for a righteous death in which a righteous life is not a necessary ingredient; who strongly insist on forms and ordinances but are strangely silent

about godly living; who say that a little self-denial before eight o'clock on Sunday morning will compensate for a great deal of self-indulgence through the rest of the day; who suffer worship to do duty for work, instead of making honest work the test of holy worship; who eulogize mint and anise and cumin, and forget mercy, justice, and truth. You will, my brothers, I trust, always speak in meekness and gentleness and loving fear whatever hard and awful truths you have to speak; but you will faithfully remember that the All-Loving Saviour Himself announced, and bequeathed to His Church, messages of woe as well as of mercy; that it is no less true than fearful that Revelation unfolds the avenging wrath of the Lamb as well as the Lamb's redeeming blood; and that there can, therefore, be no infidelity to your vows more pernicious, no treachery to men more fatal, than the substitution of some falsely facile gospel of your own for the strait gate and narrow way of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

You will find also that much public opinion is religiously very low in other ways. It prefers the peace of stagnation to the strife against error. Sometimes, indeed, it delights in controversies; but only on condition that they are superficial controversies, controversies about shibboleths and

catchwords, controversies about straws tossing on the crest of the waves, and not about truths deeply embedded in immovable rocks. The real peril of controversy generally lies in the littleness of the things controverted, and in the littleness of the spirit in which they are controverted. The greater the subject of controversy the less the peril often is, and the smaller the subject the greater the peril. This is not always so; but is sufficiently often so as to put us on our guard against it.

Again, you will find, in course of time and as your labours multiply, that another great peril will menace continuous fidelity to your Ordination vows; and the deadliness of this peril is its false assumption of the appearance of duty. There will come ever-increasing claims on your time; ever-increasing burdens on your strength. Incessant calls, all of them good and many of them urgent, will swoop down upon you from devoted persons with excellent causes. Be on your guard against the accumulation of such calls. Believe me, there is such a thing as the restlessness of benevolence, ministerial inordinateness, religious dissipation; such a thing as being always busy yet never industrious; hurrying without advancing; doing wrong in the name of right; belittling your vocation under the illusion

that you are magnifying it; and through attempting many things achieving none. Again, I say, be on your guard. Watch the insidious approach of this plausible peril. Study carefully not only your strength but your weakness; not only your powers but your powerlessness. You will find that the realization of your powerlessness will add new strength to your power. Learn to say No, nicely if you can; but at any rate to say it, and to mean it too. Take stock of your limitations; and as Dr. Pusey said to Mr. Liddon in his early days, "Limit your work." Do not puff yourself with the swelling fancy that nothing can get on without you, and that you are the only capable person on the planet, or even in the parish. Try and believe that some other people are quite as clever, quite as earnest, quite as efficient as you. Many a time, when we think ourselves indispensable, the plain paramount duty is *not* to do a thing, but to stand aside and let another do it. We shall often be surprised how much better things will be done, if only we keep out of the way and don't meddle. If too many cooks spoil the broth, too many broths spoil the meal. Vast variety and high quality seldom go together; and in the long run the quality of a man's work tells more than its variety. No man can do more than a few things well. If you

attempt too many things you are sure to do them all badly. It is far better to teach the members of your flock to do things—to expect and trust them to do them—than to do them yourself. By training others you multiply yourself; by doing everything yourself you discourage others. Keep yourself in the background—the holy background of unceasing prayer and systematic study—and plenty of good workers will probably come to the front. Above all things, as Mr. Robinson says in his excellent little book on "The Personal Life of the Clergy" (p. 139), "determine that whatever happens, it shall be 'First things first.' The highest interests must have the foremost place."

It is precisely this grand principle of "First things first" which underlies all the vows of the Ordinal. Those vows do not proscribe secondary duties, but they prescribe the duties that are primary. Whenever you are in danger from the storms of pious dissipations and plausible distractions, fly to the Ordinal as your harbour of refuge. If you cannot in any other way get rid of the importunate pleader, who would tempt you from your proper and primary work, refer him (or most likely her) to the vows of your ordination. They will prove rocks of stability, shelter from stress, an anchor of safety, the best way of deliverance.

Roughly speaking, the number of these vows is six, three for both deacons and priests and three more for priests alone. These six vows may briefly be denominated the vow of teaching, the vow of loyalty and pastoral care, the vow of systematic prayerful study, the vow of example, the vow of quiet love, and the vow of obedience. May I say a few words, and they can only be very few, on each of these vows, in the earnest hope that you will be thus induced to bestow fresh and more ample study on each of them yourselves?

1. The vow of *Teaching*. One of the distinctive features of our Church of England is that she is a teaching Church. Some Churches exalt worship at the expense of teaching; some teaching at the expense of worship. The Church of England duly exalts both, and neither at the expense of the other. In a future address (cf. p. 73) I hope to say something on the importance of preaching; let me now content myself with a single thought on the importance of teaching, and especially of teaching the young. Study carefully the art of teaching, for teaching is a great art. Do not be above receiving suggestions, or taking lessons, in the art from the schoolmaster of the parish. You will probably be wrong if you assume that you know as much about it as he does. If you cannot discern his superiority the school children can,

and will. Therefore, before you begin to practise teaching in school learn the rudiments of the art at home. By this means you will win the respect of the children; and when you have won their respect they will give you their attention. In the words of the vow, you will be able so to teach that they will keep and observe your teachings.

Especially make a point of teaching the Catechism regularly, either in church or school, or in both, and of teaching it catechetically. The Church Catechism is an unrivalled manual of religious teaching for children and young people. It is one of the great promises of our ministry that we will instruct the youth in the Catechism. Never was the promise more urgently needed than in the present age. The great need of the age is the recognition of duty: and the great message of the Catechism is the proclamation of duty; our duty as children of God to do our duty to God, ourselves, and our fellows. And do not leave off your instruction in these duties when the Confirmation classes are over. To the end of our life we all require reminding of our baptismal vows, our Creed, our duty to God and our neighbour, the true character of prayer, the importance and value of the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Communion. We need not only baptizing, but building up, in our holy

religion. The vows of the clergy bind them to this work of building up. You will find Bible classes and communicants' guilds, and courses of expository sermons a great help in this important task of edification.

2. The vow of *Loyalty and Pastoral Care.* Of loyalty to your Church I will say nothing. The nature and extent of loyalty is a vexed and burning question; and in these simple, quiet meditations I desire to avoid all vexed and burning questions, and to keep myself to matters not admitting of doubt. But whatever be your ecclesiastical theories or schools of thought, I cannot doubt, my brothers, your practical and most honourable loyalty to the doctrine and sacraments and discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and realm hath received the same according to the Commandments of God. Nor can I doubt that you will be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word. Disloyalty is so deeply rooted in dishonour—indeed is such a gross form of dishonour—that to doubt a man's loyalty to his ordination vows is to doubt his claim to honour. Only, my brothers, let me add that, as public ministers, it is not enough that we should be ourselves inwardly sure of our honour; it

is most needful that our outward actions should be such as to make our people sure of it also.

With this vow of loyalty to the Church is linked the vow of pastoral care. The two vows are, indeed, inseparable: for the care of the Master's sheep is a prime duty of the good and loyal shepherd. Hence the solemn promise in the Ordinal to search for the poor and the sick and the impotent among your flock: to search for them and not to wait till they search for you. To this vow the deacons are especially pledged. But, my brothers, none of our decanal vows cease with our diaconate; they subsist in our priesthood. All priests are deacons, though no mere deacon is a ministerial priest. It is true that the vow in the Ordinal to search for the poor was originally exacted for a purpose, which, in modern times, is fulfilled by other agencies. It is rightly growing less and less the proper business of the clergy to act as relieving officers of the poor. And when the day of rational poor relief dawns, whether by the adoption of the Elberfeldt or other system, that part of our work, now generally unsatisfactory and often actually mischievous, will come to an end, except for those of the household of faith. Meanwhile, be very careful, my brothers, lest in relieving the poor you turn them into blanket Christians.

But when pecuniary relief has ceased among the poor, the obligation of pastoral care in a higher sense, and that from house to house, will still continue. I believe that the best of all tests of a painstaking minister, and of a fruitful spiritual ministry, is constant loving pastoral care. It is very wrong to depress the divine ordinance of preaching: but it is nobler to be a pastor than a pulpiteer. When our Lord forbad His messengers to go from house to house, His injunction was clearly not against methodical pastoral visitation, but against an irregular, casual, unsettled, ministerial vagrancy. A vast experience continued by holy men from age to age, has proved the exceeding, the measureless value of faithful, diligent pastoral work. Not only does a house-going parson make a church-going people, but the parson who best cares for his people is best beloved, and most trusted, by them. The Church to which you belong is not a Congregational Church. It is a Church with a great parochial system. That system is the charter of the rights of the laity, and the privileges of the clergy. Esteem it very highly, for your work's sake. It freely opens many doors which would otherwise be closed against you. No doubt there are both difficulties and dangers connected with house-to-house visitation, especially social difficulties and

dangers attendant on familiarity. But our duty is to surmount the difficulties and confront the dangers. Our vows are upon us. And one of those vows is diligent pastoral care; a care involving personal knowledge of our flock.

3. The third vow is that of *Systematic Prayerful Study:* the study of the Holy Scriptures and such subjects as help to a knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh. In face of this vow I say mournfully, but without fear of contradiction, that the lives of some clergy can only be described as appalling. Study, systematic study, seems the last thing which occurs to them. They regard their final examination on paper by appointed experts as their emancipation from study. But, my brothers, the day of examination in this world is never past. It is new every morning. We are daily being examined by God, and by our fellow-men. The examination to which you will be daily subjected by your parishioners is a far more serious business than that of any examining chaplains. If an examining chaplain "plucks" you, you may try again; but when your parish has once "plucked" you, you will have not a single feather left. All hope has vanished. And how many clergy have been "plucked" by their parishioners—let the number of empty churches tell!

My brothers, it is altogether impossible for me to express the misery I feel at the thought of the non-studious clergyman, and especially in an age like ours, when knowledge is increasing on every hand, when an unenlightened and uninformed ministry is unavoidably a laughing-stock. I feel that wilful ignorance on the part of the clergy is like a fresh spear in the side of the Saviour. We cannot all be learned scholars, or great thinkers, or brilliant writers, but we can all be simple, honest students of the Holy Scriptures and of such subjects as help to a knowledge of the same. We can all, at all times, have one systematic treatise on the Bible, on hermeneutics, on apologetics, on sacred history, on personal religion, on the connection of Christianity with social questions, or some such topic, on hand. In a future address (cf. p. 76) I hope to touch again on this most sad and searching topic. I will now only ask, in all affection: Do you honestly think that any man can be other than treacherous to his Ordination vows who does not spend every day far more, very far more, time in prayer and the study of the Scriptures than on his newspaper or magazine?

4. The vow of *Example*. This vow is closely connected in spirit with the vow of pastoral care; for by the vow of example there is one house and

one person in the parish in particular to which we are pledged to pay especial heed. That person is myself: and that house is my own. *Will you be diligent*, so the question runs, *to frame and fashion your own selves and your families that they may be wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ?* What a strong, subtle power example is! A man's example is either his best sermon or his worst; unavoidably and immeasurably the most telling! We are sometimes troubled and anxious about our spoken sermons: their preparation, delivery, and effect. But the sermon we live is a matter deserving deeper solicitude than any we utter. What do my people think of my preaching? is a less important question than, What do they think of me? We put on a special dress, and unhappily at times a special voice, in the pulpit; but out of the pulpit our inmost self is often disrobed and naked. The ministry of that man who is two men, one in the pulpit and another outside, is doomed to the failure which dogs the heels of all contradictions and falsities.

May I here interpose just one plain word about example in money matters? Neither a borrower nor a lender be. Whatever your income, do not live above it. Keep clear of debt. Never mix your private and public accounts. Have the latter audited to the uttermost farthing.

And remember always it is less what we say than what we are which conditions our ministerial success. Not indeed that we ought not to preach ideals higher than we have ourselves attained, or set standards which we ourselves have not reached, or preach truths grander than we have fully grasped, else would our preaching be a most sorry affair; but there ought to be no possibility of doubting that we are at least trying, and trying hard, ourselves to live up to the standards we set; to realize the truths we proclaim; and to attain the ideals we exalt. We ought to make it quite clear that while preaching to others we are preaching first to ourselves; and that if at times we fail to set a noble example, it is owing to the infection of our nature, and not to any want of persistent prayerful effort.

Again this vow extends beyond our persons to our homes. Most of you are young and unmarried; and have as yet no settled home. None the less the vow is not inoperative even on you. It applies to your lodgings, and your relation towards those with whom you sojourn. Be very careful that these relations are exemplary and without reproach. And what I say to you about all other things I say particularly about your demeanour towards women, and the demeanour of women towards you: Watch. And

should you marry, remember this vow of family example before you marry, and choose a wife who will help you to found a Christian home; who will consecrate all her powers, in sickness and in health, in aiding you to bring up your children christianly; whose heart will be set more upon the influence of your home than on any other influence. For true religion, like true charity, begins at home. It was a caricature of Charles Dickens to represent a clergyman's wife as making petticoats for Hottentots while her own children were neglected at home or learning vice in the streets. But even from caricature we may sometimes learn an important, though inverted, truth. And I am sure that for no man, least of all for a clergyman, and for no woman, least of all for a clergyman's wife, can public claims of any sort be a sufficient justification for the neglect of domestic and family duties. You cannot warm a house by burnishing the chimney-top and leaving the fire in ashes. And no amount of outside conspicuous diligence will avail to win the hearts of your people if, in violation of your ordination vow, you do not in private give all diligence to frame and fashion yourselves and your families so that they may be patterns to the flock of Christ. There is a manifest hollowness in caring for other children and neglecting our own; in making a show of

piety on the housetop and neglecting its culture on the hearth.

5. The vow of *Peace*. *Will you maintain and set forwards as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love, among all Christian people, and especially among them that are or shall be committed to your charge?* On your maintenance of this vow, its firm and constant maintenance, depends, my brothers, the spiritual success of your ministry. Other success you may possibly win, but spiritual success NEVER, without quietness, peace, and love. The dew never falls in a wind, and the Holy Ghost descends not on wrangling. A parish divided against itself, a parish against its minister and the minister against the parish, cannot spiritually stand. Both minister and parish will spiritually fall. The devil is the great divider; he makes chaos out of kosmos. The broodings of the Holy Ghost bring kosmos out of chaos, and unity from diversity. One of God's attributes is that, "He maketh men to be of one mind in a house; and maketh the runagates continue in scarceness." A runagate gossiping minister, or minister's wife, brings great spiritual scarceness into a ministry; for such a mischievous ministry is a ministry pandering to self, and not leaning on God. Avoid parochial gossip as you would personal poison; it is one of the greatest of all

disturbers of peace. Moreover, it is difficult to avoid slipping down from gossip to slander; and slander is sin. For your own soul's sake, as well as for the sake of your ministry, avoid slander in all its forms; of vague rumour, insidious innuendo, cynical constructions, remote hearsay. Neither repeat it, nor receive it. Always show forth a strenuous willingness to believe the best of men and things, and to disbelieve the worst. This is not foolish optimism, but ministerial duty.

Both by precept and example teach with all emphasis the necessity to salvation of cultivating a forgiving temper. Do not take the edge off the Lord's clear and sharp announcement that the unforgiving are unforgiven; that man's trespasses are pardoned by God only when, and as, man forgives his brothers their trespasses. I say nothing about other forms of Confession; but there is one form of Confession which all good men should constantly cultivate; viz. the Confession of their faults one to another. Inculcate this habit among your people; practise it yourself. Never hesitate when you have been in the wrong to say so bravely. Own up like a man. Even should you know that your confession will be met with repulse, still make it. It is better to suffer wrongfully after confessing than to do wrongfully without confessing. It is wonderful how a

minister, who does not pretend to be always right and humbly confesses when he is wrong, wins the respect and affection of his people, and thereby does them great good spiritually.

Then, too, be a peace-lover that you may be a peace-maker. The blessings of peace are beyond all price; yet there is a price too great to pay even for peace, the price of falsehood and of faithlessness. The God of peace is also the God of battles, and sometimes battle is better than peace; battle, *e.g.*, with the devil and bad men and women, than peace with them. Christ came not to bring peace on the earth at any price; but the sword at all costs wherever truth and righteousness are involved. Only the servant of the Lord must not strive; except for such ends as he is quite sure his Lord would approve his striving for. Strife is such a fearful thing that unless in our conscience and before God we are quite certain that it is necessary, it is very wrong. See what dangers we are in by reason of our unhappy divisions! dangers to Christ's Gospel abroad, dangers to His Glory at home. Where divisions are unavoidable, do all you can to avoid making them unhappy. Live on the best and most friendly terms you can with those who differ from you and from whom you differ. Keep no companionships, join no associations, nurse no

thoughts, read no journals or books which tend to set men against one another, instead of with one another. It is very easy, and not uncommon, to foster the temper of schism within the orthodox fold. Indeed, satire not without venom, jealous cynicism, the love of assertion, the poor joy of thinking ourselves right and others wrong, the desire to say smart things and do clever things at the expense and to the humiliation of others, the carnal glory of superiority, not infrequently reveals the most schismatical of tempers in the most orthodox of believers. At any rate for us, the clergy, our daily business should be to bring people together, to break down the barriers which separate them, unless those barriers be erected by revelation itself. And even when we cannot agree with others, or induce others to agree with us in opinion, yet ought we to strive earnestly to bring about an agreement in goodwill and charity. This vow is upon us, the vow to set forwards quietness, peace, and love, and we dare not, before our God who is a consuming fire, wilfully violate it. In its fulfilment we shall win the blessing of the peacemakers.

6. The vow of *Obedience*. Of this last vow—the vow *reverently to obey your Ordinary, and other chief Ministers, unto whom is committed the*

charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgments— what can I say, my brothers, to help you? Some sections of public opinion, both political and ecclesiastical, are running very low just now in this matter of obedience. Yet there is no virtue more necessary for the making, not only of heroes and saints, but of ordinarily good men and women. Obedience is said to be the first law of heaven: certainly there can be no heaven on earth if this law be defied. It is this law alone which can give peace to the Church, or make its members individually holy. For it is unchangeably and everlastingly true that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Without obedience there could be neither beauty nor fruitfulness on the earth, neither radiance nor music in the spheres. Obedience is the cement of society and brings forth the highest powers of mind. Obedience is the essence of morality and the life of religion. A lawless society is a society trembling on the brink of ruin. A lawless mind is barren; a lawless heart vicious; a lawless religion impossible. And of all obediences, the most important is our own obedience to others and not the obedience of others to us.

Disobedience is sometimes pleasanter, though never happier, than obedience. And such pleasures as disobedience brings are but the pleasures of the moment, illusory as the flicker on the marsh which invites to the mire and bog. Disobedience is often, too, a sign of much feebleness, deceiving itself, but not others, with great show of great strength. It is the animal *not* a lion trying to roar like a lion. Giants are generally childlike; and the strongest souls the most obedient. And whatever may be said of the strength of obedience is even more true of its goodness. None but the obedient can be greatly, deeply good. Disobedience on plausible pretexts wrought the ruin: obedience, absolute and implicit, worked the salvation, of mankind. It was the sinless boast of the One Perfect Man that His meat and drink was to obey. Therefore, if you would have your children happy through life, teach them obedience in infancy; if you would have your people saved, do not withhold from them the fact that salvation is inseparable from obedience; and if you would be a pattern and a blessing to your flock, be obedient yourself, for wondrous spiritual influence flows from the fountains of a glad obedience. Very beautiful are the dying words of Richard Hooker. When, just before he entered his rest, his friends

asked him of what he was thinking, he replied, "I am meditating the number and nature of angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven; and, oh; that it might be so upon earth."

My time, my brothers, is done; and I cannot enter into the questions of true and false obedience; blind and immoral, intelligent and moral obedience; the obedience which is liberty and that which is bondage, the obedience of sons and the obedience of slaves. Nor for the simple purposes of these meditations is there need to debate such problems. They are problems of casuistry rather than of conduct. If you cultivate the temper, the habit, the desire, of obedience, you will rarely find much difficulty in solving its practical problems. It is the wit of the disobedient temper which invents conundrums about the abstract limits of obedience. In the Holy Scriptures you will find the actual limits marked clearly enough for all purposes of conduct. We are to obey God rather than man; but we ought to be absolutely and solemnly certain that it is God, the Very God, and not ourselves, our own self-will, or pride in our self-made gods, for whose sake we adventure on the perilous course of disobedience.

Such, then, are the vows, my brothers, to which

you are very soon to pledge yourselves. They are grand vows, vows beyond the power of your unaided strength. It is only in the strength and by the gracious help of God that any of us can hope to keep, even imperfectly, vast vows like these. But at least we can make our vows the stars in the firmament of our ministerial life. In the darkest night of disappointment and failure we can look up to their light, and kneel in penitent prayer and fresh resolve beneath their shining orbs. And remember, my brothers, God is behind the stars. Look through the glass of your vows for the light of His countenance, and He will help you so to teach, so to be loyal and shepherd-like, so to read and think, so to set a pattern, so to love peace and practise obedience, that, despite all your unworthiness, you will in the Holy Ghost be found worthy to take charge of the Church of God.

THE COMMISSION

The calm, still air of a great reality breathes through every portion of the Ordinal; but in no portion is the air more solemnizing than in the Commission conferred first on the deacons, afterwards on the priests. Nothing could be more impressive, more awful and glorious, both in form and spirit, than this Commission which separates men from all worldly callings and confers on them the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ their Lord.

The ministerial calling, my brothers, stands by itself distinct in sacredness from all other callings. All good callings, all honourable employments are, in a very true sense, callings from God, employments in His service. To the genuinely religious man no profession or trade of any kind, honestly conducted, is secular. It is of great importance to impress this divine fact both on our own minds and on the minds of our fellow-men. The clerical calling is not the only sacred calling. All callings

pursued in a sacred spirit are sacred. For just as the Church is not the only Society of divine ordering, and endued with divine authority, seeing that the civil powers are likewise ordained of God; and just as there is a real royal priesthood of the laity as well as of the clergy; so also it is not the ministry alone which is a sacred vocation. Every piece of work, mental or manual, done to the glory of God, is holy work. A stone-breaker or scavenger, a shepherd or husbandman, a tent-maker or vine-dresser, a fisherman or carpenter, a school-teacher or artist, a physician or lawyer—every true workman and workwoman of every degree—may be as truly called of God to their particular work as are the ministers of the Church. We clergy deceive ourselves, and do infinite mischief if we cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord alone are we." No; let us unflaggingly inculcate on our fellow-men that their calling, like ours, is a calling from God, if it is followed with all their might and in the consciousness of His supervision. Let us show them that we respect their business whatever it is, and teach them to respect it also; never looking down, as from superior heights, on any kind of honest work, however humble.

Yet while all honest occupations are honourable, and followed in a religious spirit are

religious ; while every layman true to his baptism is a deacon, *i.e.* as the term implies, a servant or minister of the Church of Christ, yea, also a priest, and king unto God ; still there remains a character quite special in the ministerial calling. To the vocation of the ministry there belongs, through the gift of Christ and the agency of His Church, a special Commission conferred for special purposes. Let us proceed, then, to enquire very simply and reverently into the character of our Commission, and of the main purposes for which our Lord and Master granted it.

And at the outset let us once again remind ourselves, my brothers, that the ministerial vocation is not to a livelihood, but to a life. It would be a very fearful thing to enter the ministry for bread, or social precedence, or fame, or self-seeking of any sort. All true labourers are worthy of their hire : and well would it be for the highest interests of both Church and nation if all hire were more worthy of true labourers. Before men can live nobly they must first be able to live. Livelihood is necessary to life. And such provision ought to be made for the clergy as will enable them to live frugal lives, yet lives unfettered by financial solicitude, to purchase books and other things necessary for the due equipment of their ministry, to rightly educate and provide for their

families, and remunerate their servants with a generous equity. But beyond a provision sufficient for this simple, self-respecting life no true clergyman will desire to go. If larger means come to him he will try to make wise and generous use of them, and keep himself free from show. Under no circumstances will he indulge in financial speculations with the credulous hope of eking out his slender income, or from a covetous lust of making haste to be rich. Every true clergyman is ready to make glad sacrifices of superfluities and luxuries, to be content, if need be, with plain surroundings and homely fare. A feather-bed priest never makes a self-exerting people. Our ministry must be an unworldly passion, not a worldly profession; an enthusiasm, not a trade, if it is to prove an effectual instrument by which the Holy Ghost may work through us the salvation of our fellow-men.

Again, our ministry must not only be a possession by the Holy Ghost and not a mere professional calling, it must also be a great separation. Separation is part of the essence of Ordination. It was the Holy Ghost Who said (Acts xiii. 2), "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." This separation is a very wonderful thing. It does not consist in the outward distinctiveness of

title, or dress, or avocation. It is a separation by, and to, and for, the Holy Ghost: a deep, inward separation. You will have read your *Sartor Resartus* in vain if you do not understand the power and appreciate the value of clothes —of the soldier's uniform, the judge's mantle, the minister's vestments. No detail, whether of gesture or vesture, can be too trifling which symbolizes some verity or subserves some noble end. Yet, if the clergyman's separation is merely outward, or chiefly outward, or too conspicuously outward, then, I am persuaded, it is a false and bad separation. The real separation, the separation blessed of God to the hallowing of the world, is inward separation: separation of mind and will, of love and life—separation in the Holy Ghost, separation unto service.

There is nothing, my brothers, absolutely nothing, which the Church and the world more needs to-day than a greater separation of the clergy, if only the separation be of the right kind. We want both more separation and less: less of the separation of separateness, more separation of sanctity; less official separation—the unsympathetic separation of a class or caste—more personal separation to the blessed service of man and God. "I pray not," was our Lord's own prayer for His chosen ones (St. John xvii. 15, 18),

"that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. . . . As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so send I them into the world." In the world, yet not of the world. In the world: mourning over its wickedness, sympathizing with its sorrows, sharing in and purifying its pleasures, assisting to the utmost of our power all its endeavours after knowledge, progress, enlightenment, goodness, exaltation—yet not of the world, with its poor materialism, its sordid pursuits, its selfish indulgencies, its narrow and dim horizons. Every true clergyman lives in a world all his own: a world high up and far beyond this lower sphere, a world of immutable truths, and abiding realities, and overflowing joys, and never-fading glories. Separation from the one world to the other, from the world of sight to the world of faith; this is the separation of all the saints, but notably of those whose grand vocation it is not only to reach after saintliness themselves, but to train others in saintliness also. It is for this we are specially ordained and sent; this is the essence and meaning of our ministry, to promote in ourselves and all men a great and clear separation from the world for the sake of a noble and lofty service in the world; to dwell as denizens in the world, kindling and fermenting

the fires of its purest, brightest aspirations, yet distinct as pilgrims and strangers, whose employer is God, whose traffic is righteousness, whose merchandise is holiness, and whose reward is within the veil.

Again, our great Commission reminds us of the apostolic character and descent of our ministry. The Apostles received their Commission from their Divine Master through the Holy Ghost; and from them, through the same Holy Ghost and from the same Divine Master, we receive our Commission also. Ours is an apostolic ministry: apostolic by descent, apostolic in character. The apostolic descent of our ministry is a great historic fact of the first magnitude. It confers a wonderful honour on our ministry. If the potentates of this world count it, and rightly, a singular glory to trace their lineage through the long backward roll of centuries, may we not also count the historic origination of our ministry from Christ Himself, its Pentecostal fount, a glorious gift, a grand inheritance, a clear authentic seal, a divine and most heavenly prize?

Yet, my brothers, there is not only strong inspiration but most humbling awe in the majesty and splendour of a gift like this. For from those to whom much has been given it is solemnly certain that much also will be required. Great

talents, in whatsoever form entrusted to our stewardship, mean great responsibilities. If the French saying be true, *La noblesse oblige*, it is even more true, *La grâce oblige*. Every gift from God spells some accountability for man; and the higher the gift, the greater the accountableness. The gifts of God are, indeed, without repentance; but they are big with responsibility and subject to recall. We have read our Bibles to little purpose if we have not read therein this tremendous lesson in the stories of the Fall and the Deluge, in the recurrent changes of the dynasties of Judah and Israel, in St. Paul's teachings about the wild and good olives, in our Lord's solemn announcement of the fate of the fruitless vine-branches, in the stern, yet gracious declaration at the beginning of St. John's gospel: to as many as received the Christ the right to become the children of God was given, but from Christ's own, who received Him not, the right was taken away. So will it be with us, the Apostles' lineal successors, the priests and prophets, the pastors and teachers, of the historic Church. Grand is our gift, but grand also is our task. Every gift of God implies some corresponding task; and the more glorious the gift, the more imperative the task. Also, if the task be not fulfilled, the gift will be forfeited. If we

are faithless priests to the Christ, then will the Christ Himself take from us and give to others the right to become priests unto God and the Father. Unless we are apostolic in character, then, as far as we ourselves are concerned, our apostolic descent is but a savour of death unto death: whereas, if we are striving to be in character apostolic, then is our apostolic descent a channel of mysterious life both to ourselves and others. In this, my brothers, we behold both the goodness and severity of God—towards the faithless, severity; towards the faithful, goodness, if they continue faithful, otherwise they also will be cut off (Rom. xi. 22).

But, besides all this, our Commission appoints us to a special work: a work dependent for its efficacy on a special dynamic agency. "*Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God and of His Holy Sacraments; In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*" Here we observe, first, that the spring and power of the priesthood is God the Holy Ghost, or, as Hooker puts it ("Eccl. Pol.," bk. V., chap.

lxxvii. 5–8), "whether we preach, pray, baptize, communicate, condemn, give absolution, or whatsoever, as disposers of God's mysteries, all words, judgments, acts, and deeds are not ours, but the Holy Ghost's"; and, secondly, that the imposition of hands is not by the bishop alone, but in fellowship and co-operation with the whole body of attendant priests. Afterwards follows the charge from the bishop alone: "*Take thou Authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the Holy Sacraments in the Congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto.*" In the ordering of deacons both the Commission and the Charge proceed from the bishop alone. Neither in the case of deacons nor priests is there any investment with robes or tradition of instruments; but to the deacons is given a New Testament, and to the priests a Bible.

We cannot study too carefully, my brothers, the long and suggestive history of our Ordinal, and particularly of our great Commission, in every detail of its development and composition. Each part and act of it is symptomatic of the mind, and characteristic of the will, of that reformed branch of the Catholic Church to which we belong, and of which we ought to be the proud and jealous custodians. Some portions of

the Commission have been, as you know, and still are, matters of keen contention; others rise high above the atmosphere of cloudy debate into the clear stillness of a sphere, awful indeed, yet altogether serene. According to my purpose in these simple meditations, it is only of these latter portions that I shall attempt to speak; and to speak very briefly.

"*Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.*" What words could be more grave and weighty than these; grave and weighty for others, still more grave and weighty for ourselves? Words, believe me, are very real things; either very real falsehoods or very real truths. It is a great hypocrisy so to explain words as to explain them away. Our Lord has solemnly warned us that by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned (St. Matt. xii. 37). And if this be true of words in general, ordinary words, how much more awfully is it true of special and deliberate words, words carefully selected and incorporated into a most sacred office, words taken from the lips of Christ Himself. Any Church which should appropriate such words as these: "*Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained,*" and make

them part of the great Commission of its clergy, and yet mean nothing by them, would be a Church openly self-condemned. It is far otherwise with our Church of England. She means by these words everything which our Lord meant by them: not more, nor yet less: not less, nor yet more.

Differences of opinion, indeed, may be reasonably entertained as to the measure of the meaning of these words in relation to absolution and discipline; to the conveyance of pardon and the relaxing or fastening of the bonds of excommunication; to the limits of priestly power, and the extent of priestly gifts:—but there can be no question whatever of the tremendous significance of these words in relation to what may be described as the prophetical office of our ministry: our work as teachers, our responsibilities as spokesmen of the *ecclesia docens.* If by our teaching and preaching, our catechising and conversation, our precepts and example, men are led to a conviction of sin, are wrought to a passion for righteousness, are penetrated with a trembling realization of judgment, and in consequence plead before God with broken and contrite hearts for pardon; then have we been the chosen channels of their pardon, the ministerial instruments of their forgiveness. We have

brought them forgiveness, and they are forgiven. But if, on the contrary, which God in His mercy forbid, by our ignorance or negligence, by our faithlessness and inconsistencies, any one remains unconvinced of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, then that one's sin is retained, and part, at least, of its retention is ours. *We* have retained it and it is retained; and its blood will be on our heads and required at our hands (Ezek. iii. 18). Oh! my brothers, it is important above all things to realize the meaning of our Commission to ourselves: its terror and its glory—an unendurable terror to realize that by our own sins the sins of others may be retained, and our ministry be a ministry of death! yet an unimaginable glory to realize that if only we are faithful, and humbly try, by word and good example, to do our best, then, by the grace of God, and despite our unworthiness, we shall be the instruments of the forgiveness of others, and our ministry will be a ministry higher even than that of the angels, a ministry of forgiveness and righteousness, and we shall shine as stars for ever and ever (Dan. xii. 3).

From this ministry of forgiveness our Commission proceeds to the ministry of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Sacraments. Of these two ministries suffer me to suggest a few, quite

simple thoughts. Taking first the Holy Sacraments; let us never forget that there are two Sacraments, and not one only, ordained by our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Both alike, and both equally, are divine institutions; both, says our Catechism, are generally necessary to salvation. Is it not, then, unseemly, contrary to the true proportion of the faith,—nay, may it not be actual sin, to give precedence to either of these Holy Sacraments: either to that instituted by the Mortal Christ on the eve of His redeeming death, or to that instituted by the Immortal Christ over whom death had no more dominion? Is it reverent, may it not be even sacrilegious, to show greater honour or ascribe greater value to the one Sacrament than to the other?

True, in our Prayer-book a seeming distinction is made between these two Sacraments, inasmuch as, in the absence of the priest, a deacon (and in the judgment of many devout and learned authorities a layman, and in great emergencies a woman) may baptize; whereas no deacon and *a fortiori* no lay person may consecrate the bread and wine in the Holy Communion. In ministering the Holy Communion the office of the deacon is limited to the distribution of the consecrated elements; in the first Prayer-book of King

Edward VI. to the distribution of the wine only. But this distinction is evidently a distinction of ministry and not of Sacraments, seeing that a like distinction is drawn between the Baptism of infants and that of adults, the Prayer-book providing that the latter Baptism shall be ministered by priests. The Prayer-book, therefore, like the New Testament, sets forth no difference of supremacy between the two Sacraments of the Gospel. The Prayer-book does not regard the Sacrament of initiation as less than that of nourishment; nor that of nourishment as greater than that of initiation. If, then, it is very meet and right that we should celebrate the Sacrament of our Lord's Death and Return with great reverence, it is very unmeet and wrong that we should fail in reverence when we administer the Sacrament of our regeneration and incorporation into membership of His Church. A shabby font is as shameful as a shabby altar. No really religious minister will administer either Sacrament in a slovenly fashion, or as a mere mechanical form. I know, my brothers, how weary and languid you will sometimes feel; but there is all the difference in the world between fatigue and formality. With fatigue God will sympathize; but formality He will sternly judge.

From the ministration of the Sacraments let us

now pass to the ministration of the Scriptures. This is a ministration of several kinds. First, it is a ministration to the minister himself. A man who does not systematically minister God's Word to himself, can seldom minister it effectually to others. As a rule, God teaches only through those who have been at great pains to teach themselves. They who by strenuous study and prayer have themselves learned the power of the Bible will best be able, through the Holy Ghost, to pass on its power to others. The effectual ministry of the Word must, therefore, be, first of all, a thoughtful earnest ministry to ourselves.

Next it should be a personal ministration from house to house. In the Church of England to-day this domestic ministration of the Word of God is too often neglected. In the best and most spiritual of the Nonconformist Communities it is, I believe, a common custom for the pastor to announce on Sunday what families he will visit in the following week, and to invite those families to have a short service of prayer and instruction on the occasion of his visit. These domestic services are, I am told, a source of great spiritual benefit. It is obvious that much delicacy and spiritual tact is needful for such services; but however difficult the task, it is well worth attempting. Secular visits have their advantages

and social visits their value; but spiritual visits, not only to the sick and afflicted, but to the healthy and happy, outweigh the importance of both. They would, I believe, receive a quite extraordinary welcome from all classes, and would issue in a mighty revival of spiritual life and family religion. They would knit together in close and sacred bonds, parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, maids and their mistresses.

Again, the ministration of the Word is often especially blessed in Bible classes; Bible classes separately for men, for women, for the youth of both sexes. The class affords in some ways a better opportunity for Bible teaching than the congregation. The main purpose of the congregation is to witness and to worship: although in the congregation the work of edification is also very important. But the universal testimony of those ministers who have been richly blessed of God both in the congregation and the class is, that for the solid establishment of their flock in the faith, the class—whether Confirmation class, Bible class, or Communicants' class—is a very powerful, an almost indispensable, instrument. Therefore I beg you pay diligent heed to your ministerial work in classes. Concerts, clubs, games, gymnastics, are all good, very good, as far as they

go. They break down barriers and set up pleasant relations between clergy and people. But they are not religion: though at times they almost seem to be mistaken for it. We take no vows to share in them; they form no part of our Commission. They may make us appear "good fellows" in the eyes of the people; but of themselves they will never make us good stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel. By no means neglect them. On the contrary, cultivate them. But, my brothers, never forget the solemn caution of St. Paul concerning them—they profit but little, for a little while and in little measure (1 Tim. iv. 8). They are not profitable for all things—at all times or beyond all time. They do not make all things new. They do not reach forward to the future life. They are physical, not spiritual. They have no promise for eternity. Again I say, use them for all they are worth; but do not mock your ministry with the sensuous superstition that they are worth more than they are. Be sure of this, and teach your people to be sure of it also—that this world, with all its sorrows and miseries, can never be made enduringly better or happier except by the inspiration and influences of religion. Even to municipal betterment and social reform, the only sure path is the path of moral progress and spiritual incentives. Nothing

but the conviction of accountableness to God can impart conscientiousness to the individual, or stability to the nation. Nothing less than the promise of fulness of joy beyond the veil can bestow in this life the felicity that fadeth not away. Never dream, then, of substituting secular amusements for spiritual culture, or of supplanting Biblical instruction in classes by secular entertainments.

Consider, next, the ministration of the Word through its public reading in the sanctuary. Reading is even more important than preaching: for in preaching we are preaching our own words, but in reading the Lessons we are preaching the message of God Himself. It is better to read the lessons searchingly than to preach a sermon strikingly. Yet how rarely the clergy receive adequate training, or train themselves, in clear intelligent devotional reading; putting tone and colour into the different passages, giving the sense and helping the people to understand the meaning! How seldom do we ask ourselves on our knees before God, "Did I read the lessons rightly and reverently? Did I make Thy message a living reality?" It is impossible to over-estimate the importance and influence of good reading of the Lessons. Bishop Ryle owed his conversion to the reading of a lesson in church. The scholarly

and saintly Bishop Wordsworth never read the Lessons in church without first reading them in his study. One of the commonest and most injurious faults of the clergy of the present day is faulty reading. Be careful, my brothers, in your reading, and God will bless your care to the benefit of your hearers.

Of the ministry of the Word by preaching, I will say only the following words. In preaching always remember the importance of others, and forget your own importance. Utter and entire self-effacement is the first essential, and the final secret, of effectual preaching. So long as we are thinking of ourselves we can never preach Christ Jesus the Lord with power. Another essential element in good preaching is the having something quite definite to say. If you don't know yourself where you are going, how can you expect others to follow you? A sermon may easily have too many points in it, but never too much point. A sermon about everything is really not a sermon about anything. Its very wealth makes it worthless. It is only the hounds which stick to the trail that catch the fox. Again, never let your sermon be against anybody, not even pugnaciously against any error. Never preach at people, but to them, and for them. Seek to destroy error by declaring truth, and to win souls by loving them.

All good preaching, my brothers, has its hands and feet on the earth, but its heart and soul in heaven. If it were all on earth, it could never lift men to heaven; if all in heaven, it could never help men on earth. Our Great High Priest and Prophet first dwelt among men and learned to understand them before He ascended up on high: else could He not have led captivity captive and given gifts, useful and precious, to men. So must it be with our preaching if it is to save them that believe: it must be of the earth, but from heaven; from above, but for below.

Again, the important questions after a sermon are not: How did I preach, well or ill? (though, as a matter of responsibility, that also is a fit question), but, how did the people listen? Did I really help anybody, convince anybody, lift anybody? Were the matter and the method calculated to instruct and to impress? Was there simplicity in my earnestness and earnestness in my simplicity? Did I preach myself, or Christ Jesus the Lord? These, and such as these, are the questions best worth asking ourselves after our sermons: questions which arise from our concern for the good of others, and not from solicitude about our own reputation.

Moreover, in preaching I imagine that most men spend too much time on single sermons;

and few men nothing like time enough on their sermons taken together. We ought to spend more time and thought on the subjects of our sermons before we begin to write them; and then, if need be, less time on the writing of any particular sermon. Manner in sermons is important, but of far greater importance is the matter. However well delivered a sermon is, if it be without substance, it is nothing more than a well-blown bubble, which wings its way on our breath, bursts, and is gone, leaving not the wrack of any conviction behind. It is, I think, as a rule, not good to read with an exclusive view to any definite sermon; it is far better to master definite subjects with no special view to particular sermons. All cramming is bad, but cramming for sermons is very bad. A sermon for which the preacher has crammed, rarely crams itself into anybody else. It has been prepared in a few hours, and in fewer hours it perishes. Very many sermons lack fulness: fulness of knowledge, fulness of conviction, fulness of clear purpose. The mouth of the preacher does not speak out of the abundance of his head and heart. Too much preaching is the mere echo of emptiness: it proceeds from emptiness and in emptiness it ends. Hand-to-mouth preaching makes ear-to-ear listening. If we would have

people carefully listen to our sermons, we must carefully prepare our subjects and make our delivery interesting. No sermon should be written the day before its delivery. There should be sufficient interval to allow for reflection and assimilation. A sermon prepared on Saturday night is too raw and badly baked to be preached the following Sunday. It is like bread baked in an oven too hot. The outside crust may be good, but inside the dough is indigestible. It is like the pardons in the pardoner's wallet in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," "all hot," and like them also in its worthlessness.

The common plea that we have not time to read systematically is a hollow and artificial plea. It is generally the plea of men incontinently bustling; not of men soberly and seriously diligent. If we read less in snippets we could read more on system. Every clergyman ought to have at least one good, big book on hand; ought to master one subject at a time, instead of nibbling at many subjects promiscuously. Systematic reading makes a full man, and a full man makes a fruitful preacher. If you want new ideas go to old books for them. Study the classics, especially the English classics. Third-class reading makes third-class preachers; first-class reading improves all preaching, though it

cannot make all preachers first-class. But one thing it does for all preachers of every class: it compels them to study style. It will not suffer them to be content with saying anything anyhow, but will impel them to say even the simplest things in the best way. The substance of a sermon is of vastly greater importance than its style; but the style is no trivial matter. A good thing badly said is better than a poor thing said artistically; but a good thing well said is better than both. Good style prepares the way for the entrance of strong truths to the souls of men; bad style sometimes blocks the way of their entrance. Therefore study style in the highest interests of your spiritual work. It will keep you from being dull, and in preaching, as in many other affairs, dulness is deadly. You must be interesting yourself if you would interest others; and unless you interest them you will lose their attention, and the loss of their attention may mean the loss of their souls.

To avoid dulness and attain interestingness, do not limit your reading to theology. Theology must, of course, be one of your principal studies. As a lawyer who did not study law would make a bad lawyer, and a doctor who did not study pathology a bad doctor, so a clergyman who does not study theology makes a bad preacher. Still,

your theology, and particularly your effectiveness in teaching it, will gain immensely from the assistance of other studies: studies in poetry, history, fiction, biography, science, systems of thought. Every man should have a favourite study outside his professional studies. It will deliver him from professional narrowness, and lend brightness and breadth to his teachings. The quotations in his letters and sermons prove that St. Paul knew well the non-Christian classics. And when he gave such strict charge to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 13) to bring to Rome the bag of books and the parchments left at Troas, it is not impossible that some of these classics may have been among his desired treasures; at least Bishop Bull seems to hold so in his sermon on "Human Means useful to Inspired Persons." At all events, there can, I think, be no room for question that liberal culture is an exceedingly valuable handmaid in the dissemination of religion, so long as it is well assimilated culture, and not the mere parade of culture in the form of junks of extraneous quotation.

Again, my brothers, let me repeat the warning against the shallow excuse that we have not time for systematic reading. We all have plenty of time to do the right things. It is because we wrongly do right things, or rightly do wrong

things, that we have not time to do right things rightly. Canon Bernard, just after his election as Bampton Lecturer, was thrown into a parish of fifteen thousand inhabitants, and while toiling in that busy sphere, wrote his remarkable book on "The Progress of Doctrine." Grote wrote a large part of his "History of Greece" while manager of a great bank. Mr. Gladstone read his Homer and his Butler through every year. The late Lord Salisbury was a keen student of chemistry. Mr. Morley and Lord Rosebery are distinguished in letters, Mr. Balfour in philosophy. Instances might be multiplied indefinitely of men, with the weight of empires, or great financial affairs, or enormous commercial enterprises on their shoulders, finding time for regular reading and enlightening culture. These men, you say, were specially gifted. Granted. But if you consider how vastly heavier their labours and more onerous their responsibilities are than ours, is there not an air of unreality in even the most ordinary clergyman, with the largest parish, permitting to himself the pretence that he has too much to do, he cannot read? But the truth often is, that they who do least, read least; and they who read most, do most. At any rate, as I said in my third address (cf. p. 42), our vows are upon us in this most serious duty. And the question at

bottom is, shall we try to be true to our vows, or content to be false?

No man can do everything. We all have to choose. It specially behoves the ministers of Christ to choose well, for their choice means so much, so very much, to others. Do not, then, undertake more things than you can hope to be able to perform. Let your motto be *multum non multa.* "This one thing I do," said St. Paul. And the man who does one thing does more than the man who attempts a hundred. Few of us have time to do many things; fewer still make time to do one thing. We spoil our work by hurrying, although we have been warned that "he that believeth shall never make haste" (Isa. xxviii. 16). Surely, if we spent less time on little things and superficial reading, we should have more time for important things and solid study. Map out your time and manage it for yourselves. Do not allow others, however excellent, to muddle it for you. As I said before, so now I say again: put first things first and keep them there. Never say Yes to a request, however urgent, when you ought before God to say No. Do not squander your time on trifles, concentrate it on realities. Do not suffer clouds of committees to dim the true splendour of your great Commission. Never do anything secular in the parish which you can

get some one else to do for you. If we observed, my brothers, these hard, yet simple, rules, I believe that the most ordinary and most occupied amongst us would soon discover that he had both time and strength for such systematic studies as help to the effectual ministration of the Holy Scriptures.

Finally, in the ministration of the Word let us ever keep our ideals clearly shining like stars above us in the firmament of our lives. And the greatest of all guiding ideals is our Lord Himself. "He created the Gospel," says Canon Bernard, "by His works, He preaches the Gospel by His words, but He *is* the Gospel in Himself." "*I am*," He said Himself, "the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me shall never die" (St. John xi. 25, 26). In preaching Him we shall never be in danger of that subtlest of all dangers: the danger of preaching ourselves. All our sermons will be meant first for ourselves—for our own reproof and instruction in righteousness—that we ourselves may, before all others, be perfected and thoroughly furnished to all good works, through the instrumentality of our own sermons and God's blessing upon them. The preacher who first preaches to himself, and humbles himself by his preaching, will never preach in vain to other men.

Above all things, my brothers, let us pray: pray before we read, pray before we write, pray when we preach, pray, always pray. Prayer cannot act as a substitute for study; nor study for prayer. Each is the natural and necessary supplement of the other. Prayer without study is indolent superstition; study without prayer is lifeless knowledge. In all our ministrations of every kind we should ask that God will work through us, and that we may work through God. This is the grand, the sublime, the resistless force of our Commission, that it is a Commission from and in the Holy Ghost.

And so, my brothers, I leave you. I thank you for so kindly listening to these simple meditations, I ask you to forgive the many manifest imperfections of what I have tried to say. I have done what I could, but no one knows so well as I how poor is my best, and how little I can do. I shall be, indeed, rewarded if, as a result of our quiet gathering here, I may hope that you will faithfully study the Ordinal for yourselves: most faithfully of all on each anniversary of your Ordination. Very soon the solemnities of your Ordination will enfold you. God grant you may never cast them off; that you may never be less solemn on any Sunday than on Sunday next! May the memory and the

grace of our Ordination remain with you and me in great power to the end of our lives! May all our work be done in that power, the power of the Holy Ghost, the Author and Giver of our Ordination: and then, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, we, all unworthy as we are, shall receive a crown of glory amaranthine, of the flower that fadeth not (1 Pet. v. 4).

THE END

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